

# *From the Wyoming Department of Health*

## **OZONE FACT SHEET**

### **WHAT IS OZONE?**

- The ozone layer, miles above the surface of the earth, protects us from cancer-causing solar ultraviolet radiation.
- Ground level ozone is formed through a complex chemical reaction involving hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and sunlight when weather conditions are optimal.
- Increased ground level ozone may cause shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, and eye and nose irritation and is especially dangerous to older adults, children, asthmatics and persons with other chronic respiratory ailments.

### **WHO IS AT RISK?**

- When ozone levels are significantly elevated everyone who works, plays or spends time outdoors may feel some symptoms. However, these effects are increased for people with asthma, children and the elderly.

### ***ASTHMATICS***

- Ozone can aggravate asthma, causing more asthma attacks, increased use of medication, more medical treatment and more visits to hospital emergency rooms.

### ***CHILDREN***

- Pound for pound, children breathe more air (and ozone) than adults.
- Children spend more time outdoors than adults.
- Children's respiratory systems are still developing.

### ***ELDERLY***

- Ozone presents an increased risk to the elderly because it can aggravate pre-existing respiratory diseases.
- The elderly experience reduced sensitivity to symptoms of ozone; therefore, early warning signs of the harmful effects of ozone may be ignored.

### **PROTECT YOURSELF**

- Individuals with asthma and other respiratory diseases should be aware that on high ozone days they are more susceptible to shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, and eye and nose irritation.

### **WATCH FOR OZONE ADVISORIES**

- Air pollution advisories may be called when weather forecasters predict weather conditions likely to cause high ozone.

**LIMIT TIME OUTDOORS**

- People at risk should try to limit their time outdoors on high-ozone days to reduce the risk of exposure to ozone and stay indoors.

**CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR**

- Those experiencing symptoms such as tightness in the chest, coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath should contact a medical professional.

For more information visit these related websites:

<http://www.epa.gov/Ozone/> & <http://deq.state.wy.us/>